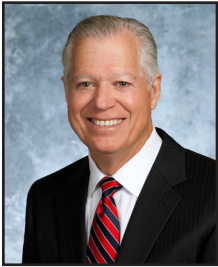




Resolve to get healthy: Join the new Wellness Challenge!

By Tom Wingate, TBCJ Member



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For many of us, an important part of the New Year involves making a few resolutions to help us lead healthier and happier lives. We resolve to spend more

time with family and friends, or to do more charity work in our communities. Some of us resolve to learn a new hobby or share our knowledge by teaching others. Many of us vow to achieve a healthier lifestyle through improved diet and physical exercise.

The Texas Board of Criminal Justice understands the importance of physical and mental health and encourages employees to live a healthy lifestyle. Physical and emotional strength helps build self-esteem. Healthy, active people can think more clearly and can handle stress better than others. They are also less likely to suffer from a heart attack, type 2 diabetes and other kinds of illness. Daily physical activity can help you keep your weight under control, lower your blood pressure and cholesterol, relieve symptoms of depression or anxiety, and even help prevent or delay the onset of osteoporosis and arthritis. Also, people who are in good physical condition use fewer sick days and are less likely to sustain work-related injuries.

Physical and mental health is essential for the smooth operation of almost every workplace, and they are critical attributes for

those who work in the criminal justice profession. For this reason, TDCJ added physical agility testing to its correctional officer training standards. A physical readiness program which sets minimum physical fitness standards for law enforcement positions has also been established by TDCJ's Office of the Inspector General.

In addition, beginning April 1, TDCJ is changing how the quarterly Wellness Challenge works. Because proactive measures are the foundation of overall good health, it is very important to have an annual physical exam to determine your physical condition and check for any symptoms of more serious illness. As part of the new Wellness Challenge, you can earn eight hours of Administrative Leave by turning in documentation indicating that you have received an annual physical exam between January 1, 2018 and December 31, 2018.

You should also check the agency website and social media platforms for new wellness-focused initiatives in the coming weeks, including personal challenges.

TDCJ employees across the state have already taken the initiative and participate in daily physical fitness activities. When visiting agency facilities, staff members from different divisions and departments are often seen spending their work break either walking or running together for exercise. Many staff members participate in cross-fit

or yoga classes during their lunch hour, and weight-loss programs and challenges are commonly available. The widespread popularity of fitness programs and sport competitions demonstrates TDCJ employees have a genuine desire to improve their physical and mental health.

Remember that physical fitness does not require long hours of rigorous exercise. Taking the first step toward a healthier life is easy, and only requires thirty minutes of physical activity five days a week. Activities can include a brisk walk or run, a bike ride, swimming, mowing the lawn or even dancing. You can even combine your favorite activities to create your own customized exercise program.

On behalf of the TBCJ, we send our congratulations to all agency employees who decide to improve their physical and mental well-being by making better lifestyle choices. ▲